

*Today in World Affairs*

# Johnson on Domingo— Ending Misconceptions

By David Lawrence

WASHINGTON.

It seems incredible that erroneous impressions should have been spread about what the United States did or failed to do before landing Marines in the Dominican Republic.

It seems strange, too, that the United States has been charged with taking an impulsive action without consulting the Latin American countries, when it now turns out that the government here did consult at least 14 of the Latin American countries and even the Peace Committee of the Organization of American States before the landing of any military units. But the idea widely conveyed was that the Administration acted impetuously and did not take the trouble to consult beforehand with any of the Latin American countries.

President Johnson told the whole story of the Dominican Republic episode in great detail to his news conference on Tuesday. What he said in an impromptu answer to a question from a reporter at the press conference is particularly significant. It reads as follows:

"Many months ago we became aware of the increasing tensions there, and the difficulties that would likely confront us. On the Sunday before we went in there on Wednesday, we asked the Ambassador, who had already come to Washington at our calling, to leave his family home and come here to meet with us. Ambassador Bennett met with us on Monday. We rushed him back to the Dominican Republic and set in motion certain steps.

"First was to attempt to obtain a ceasefire. Second was to take the precautionary steps necessary to protect approximately 5,000 Americans, as well as thousands of other nationals if that should be required. We moved our ships up there on Sunday.

"The Ambassador arrived there on Monday. He talked to various leaders. We did all we could to bring about a ceasefire in co-operation with the papal nuncio and others who were active on the scene. On Wednesday at noon, it became apparent that danger was building around the corner.

and the Ambassador gave us a warning in a cable about 1 o'clock. We had met on Monday and we had met on Tuesday. We met on Wednesday, and we had many conversations on Sunday on which we did not issue any handouts. During that period—I think from the time we were notified on Saturday until we intervened on Wednesday—we spent a good part of both day and night giving our attention to this matter, from moving the ships up to making the final decision.

"I had 237 individual conversations during that period and about 35 meetings with various people. Finally, on Wednesday afternoon at 4 something, we got another warning that we should have a contingent plan ready immediately, and a little before 6 o'clock we got a plea, a unanimous plea—from the entire country team made up of the Ambassador, CIA director, USIA, Army, Navy and Air Force—to land troops immediately to save American lives.

"Of course, we knew of the forces at work in the Dominican Republic. We were not unaware that there are Communists that were active in this effort. But 99 per cent of our reason for going in there was to try to provide protection for these American lives and the lives of other nationals. We asked our Ambassador to summon all our people immediately to the hotel—to put them in one central group.

"Men were running up and down the corridors of the

Ambassador Hotel (Santo Domingo) with tommyguns shooting out windows, through the roof, and through the closets, our citizens were under the beds and in the closets trying to dodge this gunfire. Our Ambassador, as he was talking to us, was under his desk. We didn't think we had much time to consult in any great detail more than we had talked about up to that time, but we did make the announcement about 8 o'clock and immediately asked the OAS for an urgent meeting the next morning."

The President, in answering another question at his news conference, took occasion to demolish the misconception that has arisen concerning the so-called "Johnson Doctrine"—as if something new had been devised. Actually, the United States was merely following its traditional position. He said:

"I am afraid that the people that have branded the Johnson Doctrine were unfamiliar with the fact that the nations of this hemisphere have repeatedly made it clear that the principles of Communism are incompatible with the principles of the inter-American system. . . . President Kennedy enunciated that on several occasions. The OAS itself has enunciated that. I merely repeated it."

Mr. Johnson also discussed the nature of the Communist activity in the Dominican Republic as follows:

"Their presence (in Santo Domingo) is still noted hour by hour. Their effectiveness is still observed. From day to day, we see their handiwork in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere throughout the world. Particularly in the propaganda field."

But will the explanation by the President of United States policy in the Dominican Republic overtake the misinterpretations that have been so widely circulated in recent days?

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